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Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family

Letter dated 2 December 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In reference to operative paragraph 2 of General Assembly resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003, in which the Assembly, welcomed the decision of the State of Qatar to host an international conference to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in November 2004, I have the honour to transmit to you herewith, as an annex, the text of the Doha Declaration of the Doha International Conference for the Family, issued on 30 November 2004.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 94.

(*Signed*) Jamal Nasser **Al-Bader**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex to the letter dated 2 December 2004 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Doha Declaration

Introduction

Representatives of Governments and members of civil society met in Doha, Qatar, on 29 and 30 November 2004, for the Doha International Conference for the Family, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The Conference was convened under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, State of Qatar.

The preparatory proceedings of the Doha Conference for the Family gathered the views of government officials, academicians, faith-based groups, non-governmental organizations and members of civil society.

The Conference recalls regional meetings held in Cotonou, Benin; Mexico City, Mexico; Stockholm, Sweden; Geneva, Switzerland; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and other venues; and notes the proposals and views expressed during the Conference by all participants.

Preamble

Reaffirming that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society, as declared in article 16 (3) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

Noting that 2004 marks the tenth anniversary of the United Nations 1994 International Year of the Family and that the Doha International Conference for the Family was welcomed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 58/15 of 3 December 2003;

Acknowledging that the objectives of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family include efforts to (a) strengthen the capacity of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor policies in respect of families; (b) stimulate efforts to respond to problems affecting, and affected by, the situation of families; (c) undertake analytical reviews at all levels and assessments of the situation and needs of families; (d) strengthen the effectiveness of efforts at all levels to execute specific programmes concerning families; and (e) improve collaboration among national and international non-governmental organizations in support of families;

Taking into consideration the academic, scientific and social findings collected for the Doha International Conference, which collectively demonstrate that the family is not only the fundamental group unit of society, but is also the fundamental agent for sustainable social, economic and cultural development;

Recognizing the need to address the challenges facing the family in the context of globalization;

Realizing that strengthening the family presents a unique opportunity to address societal problems in a holistic manner;

Reiterating that strong, stable families contribute to the maintenance of a culture of peace and promote dialogue among civilizations and diverse ethnic groups;

Welcoming the announcement by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser Al-Missned, Consort of His Highness the Emir of Qatar and President of the Supreme Council for Family Affairs, State of Qatar, about the creation of an international Institute for Study of the Family,

In this regard, we reaffirm international commitments to the family and call upon all Governments, international organizations and members of civil society at all levels to take action to protect the family.

Reaffirmation of commitments to the family

We reaffirm international commitments to strengthen the family, in particular:

1. We commit ourselves to recognizing and strengthening the family's supporting, educating and nurturing roles, with full respect for the world's diverse cultural, religious, ethical and social values;

2. We recognize the inherent dignity of the human person and note that the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care before as well as after birth. Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person;

3. We reaffirm that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to the widest possible protection and assistance by society and the State;

4. We emphasize that marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses and that the right of men and women of marriageable age to marry and to found a family shall be recognized and that husband and wife should be equal partners;

5. We further emphasize that the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children from infancy to adolescence. For the full and harmonious development of their personality, children should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding. All institutions of society should respect and support the efforts of parents to nurture and care for children in a family environment. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children and the liberty to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

Call for action

Taking into account the above commitments, we call upon all Governments, international organizations and members of civil society at all levels to:

Cultural, religious and social values

1. Develop programmes to stimulate and encourage dialogue among countries, religions, cultures and civilizations on questions related to family life, including measures to preserve and defend the institution of marriage;

2. Reaffirm the importance of faith and religious and ethical beliefs in maintaining family stability and social progress;

3. Evaluate and reassess the extent to which international law and policies conform to the principles and provisions related to the family contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international commitments;

Human dignity

4. Reaffirm commitments to provide a quality education for all, including equal access to educational opportunities;

5. Evaluate and reassess government policies to ensure that the inherent dignity of human beings is recognized and protected throughout all stages of life;

Family

6. Develop indicators to evaluate the impact of all programmes on family stability;

7. Strengthen policies and programmes that will enable families to break the cycle of poverty;

8. Evaluate and reassess government population policies, particularly in countries with below replacement birth rates;

9. Encourage and support the family to provide care for older persons and persons with disabilities;

10. Support the family in addressing the scourge of HIV/AIDS and other pandemics, including malaria and tuberculosis;

11. Take effective measures to support the family in times of peace and war;

Marriage

12. Uphold, preserve and defend the institution of marriage;

13. Take effective measures to strengthen the stability of marriage by, among other things, encouraging the full and equal partnership of husband and wife within a committed and enduring marital relationship;

14. Establish effective policies and practices to condemn and remedy abusive relationships within marriage and the family, including the establishment of public agencies to assist men, women, children and families in crisis;

Parents and children

15. Strengthen efforts to promote equal political, economic, social and educational opportunities for women and evaluate and assess economic, social and other policies to support mothers and fathers in performing their essential roles;

16. Strengthen the functioning of the family by involving mothers and fathers in the education of their children;

17. Reaffirm that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children;

18. Reaffirm and respect the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

We request the host country of the Conference, the State of Qatar, to inform the United Nations General Assembly of the proceedings of the Conference, including the Doha Declaration, in particular during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family to be held on 6 December 2004.